


Head Start and Services to Homeless Children



The Improving Head Start Act of 2007 legislation has made an important change to Head Start eligibility. Children 0 to 5 years old of homeless families are now categorically eligible to participate in Head Start and Early Head Start programs, regardless of the family's level of income. This change in eligibility requirements will provide more opportunities for our State's most vulnerable citizens!

What does this mean for Early/Head Start programs?

-  Early/Head Start programs will now be required to follow the regulations set forth in the *McKinney-Vento Act* - the primary piece of federal legislation dealing with the education of children and youth experiencing homelessness in U.S. public schools.

This minimally includes adopting the following definition of "homelessness" set forth in the regulation:

The term "homeless children and youths" -


(A) means individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence (within the meaning of section 103(a)(1)); and

(B) includes—


(i) children and youths who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; are abandoned in hospitals; or are awaiting foster care placement;

(ii) children and youths who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings (within the meaning of section 103(a)(2)(C)); and

(iii) children and youths who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings.

-  Early/Head Start programs will now be required to prioritize children of homeless families for enrollment and, if there is a vacancy, immediately enroll them (even if all enrollment documents have not been obtained up front).

Where can I get more information about Head Start and serving homeless children?

-  The Head Start-State Collaboration Office will present workshops on this topic at the following conferences:

- NC Head Start Association Training Conference ~ April 22-25, 2008 (Winston-Salem)
- NC-Association for the Education of Young Children ~ September 18-20, 2008 (Greensboro)

-  Consult OHS's Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center website:
<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc>

-  Consult the National Center for Homeless Education website: <http://www.serve.org/nche/>

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